RUGBY

Perils of migrant labour

Robert du Preez, probably the biggest and strongest scrumhalf in the world, scored one of his special brand of tries at King's Park on Saturday — but something seemed to be lacking in his muscular charge to the line. It was as if someone was doing an impersonation of the Du Preez that one has become used to. In my picture of him, he will always be in the blue jersey of Northern Transvaal. I just cannot get used to him in the black and white of Natal.

It is the same with Heinrich Rodgers, now propping the scrum for Transvaal, having once been part of that formidable Northern Transvaal trio with Uli Schmidt and Jan Lock. Somehow, even though Rodgers is in excellent form, he seems smaller in the Transvaal jersey.

Now take centre Jeremy Thomson. When playing for Natal alongside Dick Muir he seemed strong, fast and elusive. But in the stripe of Transvaal he appears frail and puny, especially last week when up against his crash-tackling former partner.

Western Province people have supported my view that it was impossible to get used to the sight of centre Michael du Plessis and, his brother, Carel, playing for Transvaal — even though they played a critical role in taking their adopted province to the 1987 Currie Cup final.

Rugby's birds of passage are going to play a big role in the Transvaal vs Natal Currie Cup final which will be played at Ellis Park on September 12.

Transvaal appear to have "bought" wisely. Their acquisitions — Rodgers, flyhalf Hennie le Roux (EP) and fullback Theo van Rensburg (Northerns) — have each played an important role in setting up yet another crack at the trophy. It's Transvaal's fourth final in the past seven years but they haven't won it since 1972.

Of course, there are transfers and transfers. The calf muscle injury may be ironic: you'll remember that when Garth Wright (once EP) broke a leg last season, Transvaal took the drastic step of "hiring" Free State scrumhalf Stompie Fourie for a couple of weeks. Once again, there is no obvious replacement if Wright cannot play.

Natal have committed themselves even more deeply to imports. Their pattern — apart from the role already played by former Transvaal flank Wahl Bartmann — has been built around Du Preez and former Free State backs Henry Honiball and Pieter Muller.

But in Natal's case, the importance of loyalty and the dependability of players with an inbred allegiance to a province is emphasised. Hugh Reece-Edwards, Natal's most-capped player with 142 games, seems likely to keep the fullback job now with Andre Joubert (formerly Free State) injured or out of form.

The difficulty of getting used to players in new disguises was brought home to me in a letter from Port Elizabeth. The writer suggests that I am an unmentionable part of a donkey for saying in one of my articles that Adri Geldenhuys represents Northerns.

Of course I know that Geldenhuys locks the scrum for Eastern Province. It's just that in my mind's eye I see him as a Northern Transvaler — and, possibly, I have a suspicion that he would play better rugby if he were to return to his old province. At least when writers of columns make mistakes their names are attached to the copy. This is more than you can say for some letter writers.

The most successful provincial transfer has probably been Jannie Breedt — perhaps because he had keen personal reasons, rather than lucrative financial ones, for leaving Pretoria. But not all players benefit from a change of base.

Moaner van Heerden, Andre Skinner and Pote Fourie had to return to the strict discipline of Northern Transvaal to regain their best form. Adriaan Richter, on the other hand, could not make headway in Transvaal and crossed the Jukskei to find a permanent home in a Currie Cup team; Cheese van Tonder achieved greater prominence after leaving Johannesburg for Bloemfontein. This season F A Meiring, possibly because he was denied the opportunity to play with the injured Michael du Plessis, hastened back from Port Elizabeth to Pretoria.

Natal has proved over the years to be a happy destination for migrants. Men such as Wynand Claassen and Gawie Visagie became Springboks in the last outpost; Durban seemed to have a special attraction for Wallaby forwards of the calibre of Dick Cocks, Mark Loane and Tom Lawton.

All Black No 8 Murray Mexted knew in his honest way what he wanted from Durban: "It's got the sea and the sun and I like to surf. What more do you want?" While he was there the team often wished he would concentrate more on the rugby.

In the end, it seems the chance of success in a new province depends on a rugby-related reason — the chance to play in a team permanently, to concentrate on a certain position, to play alongside a particular player, and even to cause dissatisfaction in the province being left behind.

But pure financial greed seldom seems to work.

Dan Retief

ISSUES THAT MOVE

Pioneer black artist George Pemba turned 80 this year but is still painting away with undimmed vigour. For decades Pemba was overshadowed by other black artists who were no more talented, but were taken up by the (white) liberal art establishment. Reassessment started with his inclusion in *The Neglected Tradition* at the Johannesburg Art Gallery, spread with a solo show at the Grahamstown Festival in 1989, and was sealed by a sell-out at Everard Read last year.

To commemorate the artist's reaching 80, Everard Read is showing some of Pemba's recent work until tomorrow.

Among other current Johannesburg exhibitions, Goodman Gallery has watercolours by more than 30 artists, and Susan Woolf can be seen at Karen McKerron. Woolf's large oils reflect the issues that move her most: the political struggle, family life and the importance of women.

GRAHAMSTOWN FESTIVAL

Crowded hours

The Standard Bank Festival of the Arts held annually in Grahamstown must surely have delighted its organisers this year. A record number of visitors (about 40 000) made the

pilgrimage — a considerable increase over last year. And, judging by the demand for tickets and accommodation, it is doubtful if the small eastern Cape town can handle any more. Yet this is part of the charm of the festival: crowded and bustling, it creates a special energy.

A pleasant problem is always to decide which performances to attend in the limited time available and which to avoid. For once I made the right choice. I concentrated on the musical fare and was well rewarded by an outstanding performance of Puccini's *La Bohème*. The singing — Sidwill Hartman, Georgina von Benza, Dewet van Rooyen, Aviva Pelham — was of La Scala standard; indeed, Hartman is a tenor to rival any in the world today. Von Benza (Mimi) is a magnificent soprano of prodigious range and quality.

Director Christine Crouse has earned credit with the opera's mammoth staging and the sets, not to mention the chorus of about 70 adults and children, plus the stage band. And Capab's orchestra, under Terence Kern, was splendid. A venture which must rank with the best on offer today, this production alone would have made it worth travelling to Grahamstown.

The Capab Orchestra had other treats in store. In the Beethoven concert, this time under Gérard Korsten's baton, they performed the Egmont Overture, the Triple Concerto and the *Eroica* symphony. I'm afraid I can't be unstinting about the *Eroica;* it lacked the pace and richness which the work demands and the brass section was less than perfect. Possibly it was under-rehearsed.

The Triple, consisting of Lamar Crowson (piano), Jurgen Schweitering (violin) and Eric Martens (cello) was excellent and, in a memorable separate concert as the Festival Quartet, they were joined by Korsten on the viola.

To round off the positive: a talk by Helen Suzman on "Women and Politics" was a highlight. Suzman, after four decades in politics, is an accomplished and entertaining public speaker with a fund of humorous anecdotes, especially about her stormy years in parliament, where she had to contend with male derision, paternalism and, finally, grudging admiration. "Helen, you have a man's brain," a Nat member once told her. To which she retorted: "That's more than I can say about you."

When it comes to the live theatre on offer at the festival, it's very much a matter of pot luck. One can play it safe, of course, by sticking to the proven and avoiding the untried fringe. But that would be snobbish and cowardly and is certainly not what it's all about. Good stuff does emerge from time to time, though there is not the political energy there was when the stage was almost the only place where radical anti-apartheid views could be expressed.

Death and the King's Horsemen is a case in point. Written by Nigerian poet Wole Soyinka and directed by Pact's Francois Swart, this play of the colonial era, seemingly by mutual consent, received top billing at the festival. It also received praise and non-praise in equal quantities. I must confess to being disappointed; tribal ritual alone cannot replace drama, even if the subject itself is dramatic, nor does the unedited West African idiom lend itself to the demands of the modern stage. Despite some good moments, it becomes tedious.

Nicholas Ellenbogen's *Elephant of Africa* is a bold venture into symbolic folklore. It has an endearing quality and should have been good theatre, but a cramped stage and the tendency to over-act leaves it somewhat short on excellence.

Mirakel, Reza de Wet's newest offering, is entertaining despite some grotesque overtones. Patrick Mynhardt in particular, as the platteland impresario, gives a first-classe performance, abetted by a fine Afrikaans cast. It's not as good a play as De Wet is capable of, due, I believe, to a conscious effort on her part to encapsulate goodness and *eerlikheid* into what should have been merely amusing and touching.

Pieter-Dirk Uys's *Paradise is Closing Down* has been revised and honed to capture the political ambience of present-day Cape Town. He has made a good job of it. No farce, it's outrageously funny yet succeeds in providing the current apocalyptic view through the goings-on of a trio of hedonistic gays. There are some brilliant performances.

Other mainstream plays which at least achieved the merit of controversy were *All the Rage, Bloodstream, Child of the Moon* and *Fatal Choices.*

Joe Podbrey

MOTORING

Burning rubber

Never mind white-walled tyres for upmarket taxis: the next development in the field of round rubber is the green tyre. It's not green in colour but designed to contribute substantially to environmental protection.

All tyre manufacturers are hard at work trying to clean up their act but Michelin has already started production of its green tyre in Europe and North America. Spearheading Michelin's drive is its success at producing a low rolling resistance tyre. For a start, such a tyre should significantly reduce fuel consumption and therefore reduce pollutants such as carbon dioxide.

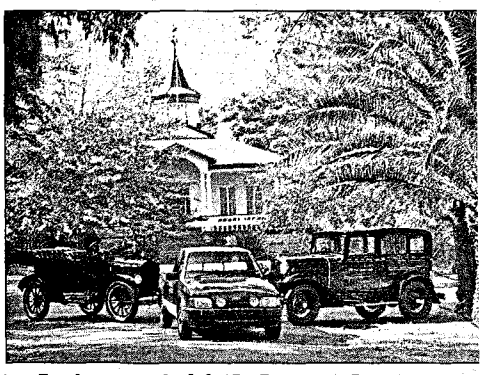
Michelin maintains that if the rolling resistance of a vehicle's tyres is reduced by 35%, then the average reduction of fuel consumption on the vehicle is 5%.

In France (the home of Michelin) fuel savings would amount to about 1bn litres annually and reduce carbon dioxide emission by about 2,5m tons.

Michelin has also addressed the problem of noise pollution from tyres. Its green tyre cuts the intensity of road noise by half at a steady speed of 80km/h. "But we feel that more can be achieved by working on the road surface itself, than on the tyre." A lower mass of a tyre also reduces energy usage.

But it's the tyre waste problem that's causing most concern these days. As Michelin point out, a tyre is not biodegradable and its recycling does not allow the recovery of the original raw materials — but "the fact that it is composed of oil-derived products means that it is a reservoir of energy which can be tapped." Almost 1bn tyres worldwide reach the end of their useful life every year. Because tyres burn very well, a number of countries convert the fuel energy of tyres by burning them under controlled conditions, such as in cement plant furnaces and power stations.

The energy content of a car tyre corresponds to 27*l* of oil.



Fords ... *Model T, Bantam Leisure, Model A*

The country's largest veteran car club, The Piston Ring, has decided to resurrect its Ford Festival. It was last held in 1987. Various anniversaries will be celebrated:

- ☐ 65 years since the last Model T Ford was produced;
- ☐ 65 years of the first Model A;
- ☐ 60 years of the first Ford V8 engine;
- ☐ 45 years since Henry Ford's death;
- ☐ 25 years since the first Ford Formula One victory; and
- ☐ 70 years since Ford came to SA.

More than 500 collectable Fords will be on display at the Modderfontein scout grounds on Sunday, August 30. It's been designed as a family fun day from 9 am; entrance for the public is free.

According to Selwyn Kerr, of Samcor's Ford division: "There are more collectable Fords in SA than any other single make, which speaks volumes for the high standards of engineering that went into them."

Doug Kemsley

WINE

Adding value

The growth of the fine wine industry over the past two decades is now a matter of record.

In the early Seventies Cape red wines emanating from the best known producers commanded little more than R1,50 a bottle retail and enjoyed no status compared with French appellations.